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CHINESE JEWS

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BY

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CHINESE JEWS.

THE Chinese and the Jews belong to the oldest nations in the world, but whilst the Chinese are the most isolated and self-contained of peoples, it may be said of the Jews that they are the most wide-spread and scattered. I propose to give the result of some inquiries into the question of how the Jews have fared in the Celestial Empire.

It is only in quite recent times that any Jewish writer has so much as noticed the existence of a Jewish settlement in China. Benjamin of Tudela refers to the country, but, well informed as he was, he makes no mention of the existence of a Jewish colony there.

We owe to the Jesuits the first authenticated accounts we possess¹. It was in the time of Queen Elizabeth that the Church of Rome sent out to China a band of missionaries who happened to be men of the world, and withal, men of culture and knowledge. They were well received in Peking. Several of them were even raised to the rank of Mandarin. As Presidents of the Tribunal of Mathematics they advised the Government as to the Calendar, and assisted the Astronomical Board. Father Ricci was one of the first of these missionaries, and in the report to the Propaganda Fide, at Rome, we are told how he came to know about the existence of Chinese Jews.

One summer day, in the early part of the seventeenth century, Ricci received a visit from a scholar who had come to Peking in order to pass his examination for a government appointment. The candidate was anxious to make the acquaintance of one who, he surmised, must be

¹ Trigaltius, *de Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas*, Aug.Vind., 1615. A. Semedo, *Letters from Jesuit Missions*, 1627. Id., *Further Reports*, Madrid, 1642.

a co-religionist, for it was said that he worshipped one God, the Lord of heaven and earth, and yet was not a Mohammedan. Father Ricci was struck with his visitor's features, so different from those of an ordinary Chinaman, and took him to his oratory, where he knelt before the picture of the Holy Family with St. John the Baptist, and another, that of the Evangelists. The visitor did so likewise, saying, "We in China do reverence to our ancestors. This is Rebecca with her sons Jacob and Esau, but as to the other picture, why make obeisance to only four sons of Jacob, were there not twelve?" Then mutual explanations were given. The visitor was an Israelite, Ngai by name, who had come to Peking from Kai-fung-foo, the ancient capital of Ho-nan. In this city, the visitor explained, his community had a synagogue which they had recently repaired, and in which there was a roll of the Law which was over 400 years old. "At Hang-chow-foo," he said, "there was a larger congregation of Jews, who also had a synagogue; Jews dwelt in other provinces also."

Father Ricci was able to verify all these statements, and received visits from other native Jews. Julius Aleni, his successor, had a fair knowledge of Hebrew, and he paid the congregation a visit in 1613. Semmedo, writing in 1642, reports that Jews were living in four Chinese towns, and that they were much respected.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century we have further accounts from the Jesuits. Gozani, one of them, wrote a letter from Kai-fung-foo, dated November 5, 1704, giving full details of the Jewish customs, and describing their synagogue. Later on Domingo sketched a plan of the communal buildings, and Fathers Gaubil and Cibot obtained copies and translations of the inscriptions on the walls and on certain monumental stones¹.

¹ *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des Missions étrangères par quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus*. Paris, vol. VII, 1707. Id., *Reports of Gaubil and Domingo*, vol. XXXI, 1774. *Commentatio de Iudaeis Sinensibus*, an Appendix to Brotier's *Tacitus*. Paris, 1771.

Quite recently Père Tobar has published, under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Mission at Shanghai, a most valuable work¹ on these inscriptions. Facsimiles and translations into French of the inscriptions on the stone tablets or steles severally dated 1489, 1512, and 1663, are given along with twenty-three horizontal and seventeen vertical inscriptions which were found in the synagogue. We must indeed be thankful to the Jesuits for having placed within our reach these precious records of the past. The following are abstracts of the dated inscriptions:—

I. ABSTRACT OF INSCRIPTION ON STONE STELE OF 1489.

Abraham was the nineteenth in descent from Adam.

The patriarchs handed down the tradition forbidding the making and worshipping of images and spirits, and the holding of superstitions.

Abraham pondered over problems of Nature and arrived at the belief in the one true God and became the founder of the religion we believe in to this day. This happened in the 146th year of the Tcheou dynasty.

His belief was handed down from father to son till Moses, who, it is found, was alive in the 613th year of the Tcheou dynasty. He was endowed with wisdom and virtue. He abode forty days on the summit of Mount Sinai, refraining from meat and drink, and communing with God. The fifty-three portions of the Law had their origin with him. From him the Law and tradition was handed down unto Ezra, who was likewise a patriarch.

Man in his daily pursuits must ever have God before him. We pray three times a day: morning, noon, and evening.

When praying, the worshipper first bends his body; then in silent devotion he offers up his prayer or raises his voice, swaying, meanwhile, to and fro. At the end, he retires three paces and advances five, then turns towards the left and right, and finally looks upwards and downwards, to show his belief that God is everywhere.

It is incumbent upon the Jew to venerate his ancestors. Twice in the year, in the spring and in the autumn, he offers them oxen and sheep together with the fruits of the season.

¹ *Inscriptions Juives de K'ai-fong-fou*, par le P. Jérôme Tobar, S. J. *Variétés Sinologiques*, No. 17, Chang-hai, 1900.

Four days every month are devoted to purification and to stimulating to charitable acts. Each seventh day is devoted to rest, and a fresh period of good deeds then commences anew. In the fourth season of the year, the Jew places himself under severe restraint for seven days. One entire day he abstains altogether from food, devoting it to prayer and repentance.

Our religion came originally from Tien-tchou (India?).

Seventy families, viz. Li, Yen, Kao, Tchao, and others, came to the Court of Song, bringing as tribute cloth of cotton from Western lands. The emperor said, "You have come to China. Keep and follow the customs of your forefathers, and settle at Peën-lang (Kai-fung-foo)."

In the first year of Long-hing of the Song dynasty (1163), when Lie-wei (Levi) was the Ouseta (Rabbi), Yentula erected the synagogue. Under the Yuen dynasty, in the sixteenth year of the Tche-yuen cycle (1279) the temple structures were rebuilt. The dimensions on each side were thirty-five tchang (about 350 feet).

The Emperor Tai-tsou, who founded the Ming dynasty, granted in 1390 land to all who submitted to his authority, on which they could dwell peacefully and profess their religion without molestation. The Jews had ministers of religion who were called Man-la (Mullah) to rule the synagogue and to watch over the religious institutions.

In the nineteenth year of Yong-lo (1421), Yen-Tcheng, a physician, received from the emperor a present of incense and permission to repair the synagogue. Then was received the grand tablet of the Ming dynasty to be placed in the synagogue. The emperor bestowed honours and titles upon Yen-Tcheng.

In 1461 there was an overflow of the Yellow River, and the foundations alone of the structure were left standing. Li-yong, having obtained the necessary permission from the provincial treasurer, rebuilt the temple and had it decorated.

Later on, the cells at the rear of the synagogue were put up, and three copies of the Holy Law were placed there. A copy of the Law had before this been obtained from Ning-pouo; another had been presented by Tchao-Yng of Ning-pouo. Various dignitaries presented the table of offerings, the bronze vase, the flower vases, and the candlesticks. Other members of the community contributed the ark, the triumphal arch, the balustrades, and other furniture for Israel's temple called I-se-lo-nie-tien.

All this has been recorded, to be handed down to the latest generations by me, Kin-Tchong, literary graduate, and engraved by others on durable stone on this stele in the second year of Hong-Tche (1489).

II. INSCRIPTION ON STONE STELE OF 1512.

Erected by Tsouo Tang, a mandarin, and other dignitaries in the seventh year of Tchong-te of the Ming dynasty, when a copy of the Law was presented by Kin-Pou of Wei-yang. The inscription gives details of the Jewish religion, its moral and other ordinances, and its canonical books, together with the historical incidents already referred to in Inscription I. The following passage is of interest :—"After the Creation, the Doctrine was transmitted by Adam to Noah; thence unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and afterwards through the twelve patriarchs to Moses, Aaron, and Joshua. Ezra promulgated the Law, and through him the letters of the Yew-thae (Jewish) nation were made plain."

III. INSCRIPTION ON STONE STELE OF 1663.

In a long preamble an attempt is made to show that there is nothing in the Sacred Law of the Jews which is not in conformity with the six canonical books of the Chinese. Then follow notices of the Jewish settlement and of the historical incidents already referred to in Inscription I. A graphic account is given of the events which followed the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1642. The city of Kai-fung-foo, then called Peën-lang, stood six-months' siege by the rebel chief Li Tse-tcheng, who eventually caused the fall of the city by diverting the Yellow River. The loss of life was great, and the synagogue was destroyed; 200 and odd Jewish families were saved, and took refuge on the north side of the river. The names are recorded of those who succeeded in saving the scrolls and other sacred books which were floating on the water. These, with other sacred writings which were rescued out of the ruins of the synagogue, were placed in a large house away from the city, where, for a time, the Jews assembled for divine service. About ten years afterwards, Tchao Yng-tcheng, a Jewish mandarin from the province of Chen-si, who was in command of a force of soldiers, came to Peën and did much to restore the city, the roads and the bridges. Aided by his brother, Yng-teou, he induced his co-religionists to return to the city and to take up their old habitations close to the temple which was rebuilt in the year 1653, in the tenth year of the reign of Choen-tche. Full particulars are given of the work of reconstruction and of the part taken by the members of the seven houses. It was not possible to make up more than one complete scroll of the Law out of the parchments recovered from the waters. This task was entrusted to their religious chief. The scroll, much venerated by the faithful, was placed in the middle

of the ark. Twelve other scrolls were gradually collated and put in order by members of the community, whose several names are given on the back of the stele, and the other holy writings and prayer-books were repaired and revised with every care. The commandant Tchao Yng-tcheng, before leaving the city, wrote an account of the vicissitudes undergone by the sacred scrolls, and his brother published a book of ten chapters on the subject. Several high mandarins, whose names are given in the stele, took a part in the work of the restoration of the synagogue, also in the erection of the stele, which took place in the second year of Kang-hi of the Tsing dynasty (1663).

Summarizing the historical references in these inscriptions, and in the accounts of the Jesuit fathers and other reliable writers¹, we arrive at the following results:—Jews had certainly settled in China some time during the Han dynasty, which ruled from 200 B.C. to 220 A.C. It is supposed that the settlement took place soon after the year 34 A.C., at which time terrible persecutions of the Jews took place in Babylon; no less than 50,000 were then massacred. Others hold that the settlement took place thirty-five years later, after the fall of Jerusalem. It is quite possible that the Jewish colony in China may be of even older date. Having regard to the fact that the trade route of ancient times from China and India was not exclusively maritime, but crossed the steppes and highlands of Central Asia, and then passed through Media, Mesopotamia and Syria, it is not at all impossible that sections of the ten tribes of Israel may have found their way to China, as we believe they did find their way to Cochin China. A passage in 2 Kings xvii. 6 is to the effect that Shalmaneser carried Israel away and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

¹ C. G. von Murr, *Versuch einer Geschichte der Juden in Sina; nebst P. Ignaz Koeglers Beschreibung ihrer heiligen Bücher*. Halle, 1806. *Jewish Expositor*, vol. I. London, 1815. E. C. Bridgman, *The Chinese Repository*. Canton, 1834. Terrien de Lacouperie, *Babylonian and Oriental Record*. London, 1886, &c. Henri Cordier, *Les Juifs en Chine*. Paris, 1891. Rev. A. Kingsley Glover, *Jewish Chinese Papers*, 1894. Alexander Wylie, *Chinese Researches*, Shanghai, 1897.

The allusion in Isa. xlix. 12, "Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and the west; and these from the land of Sinim," points to China.

In Renaudot's translation of "Ancient accounts of India and China, by two Mohammedan travellers who went there in the ninth century¹," we read that over 100,000 Mohammedans, Jews, Parsees, and Christians, who came to China for purposes of commerce, perished in the Bai-chu revolts. From incidental remarks in Marco Polo's *Travels*, we learn that the Jews were sufficiently numerous in his time (1286) to exercise political influence in China and Tartary.

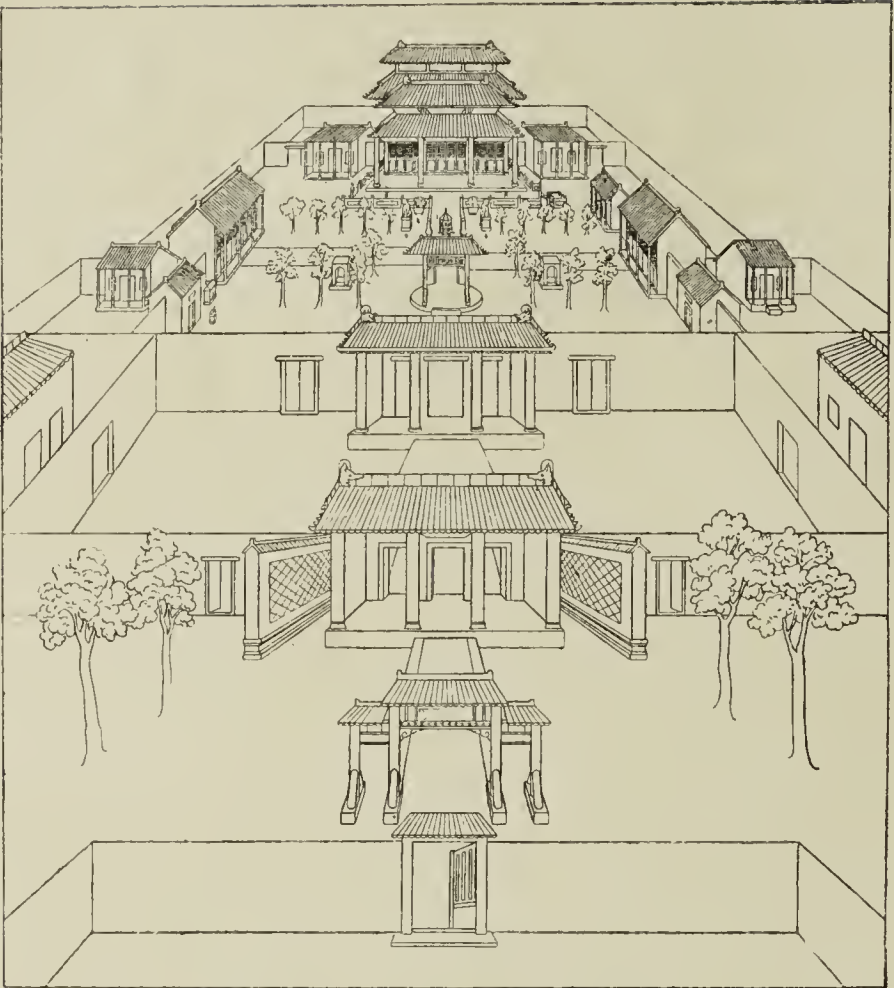
Ibn Batuta, a writer of the fourteenth century, states that Jews then resided in China². In his account of the city of Khansa (Hangchow), he remarks: "In the second division are the Jews, Christians, and the Turks; these are numerous, and their number is not known, and theirs is the most beautiful city. Their streets are well disposed, and their great men are wealthy."

In those days Kai-fung-foo, called by the Tartars Peën-lang, was a city six leagues in circumference; Gibbon states that over one million families dwelt in it. Naturally the Jews would flock to such a city for trading purposes, and so we find that in the days of the Emperor Heao-tsung many Jews came thither by way of Persia and Khorassan. They won the emperor's favour by presents of cotton or cloth.

In course of time the city suffered from inundations of the Yellow River, and frequent conflagrations sadly reduced its importance. The Jewish quarter was not more than five hundred feet from the river embankment, and was specially prone to damage by floods. In 1642 the city was besieged; the embankments were demolished, 100,000 people perished, and many Hebrew manuscripts were destroyed. We read of

¹ Translated from the Arabic by E. Renaudot. Paris, 1718.

² *The Travels of Ibn Batuta*. Translated from the Arabic by Rev. Dr. Lee. Issued by London Oriental Translation Fund, 1829.



SKETCH OF TEMPLE BUILDINGS AT KAI-FUNG-FOO.

(From designs of FATHERS DOMENGO and BRUCKER.)

Entrance.

Pai-leou or Triumphal Arch.

Grand Portal with side entrances.

Portico with side entrances.

Triumphal Arch.

Stone Steles.

Façade of Temple.

Space for erection of Tabernacle on Festival.

Two Lions on Pedestals.

Vessel for Incense.

Flower Vases.

Halls for Assembly.

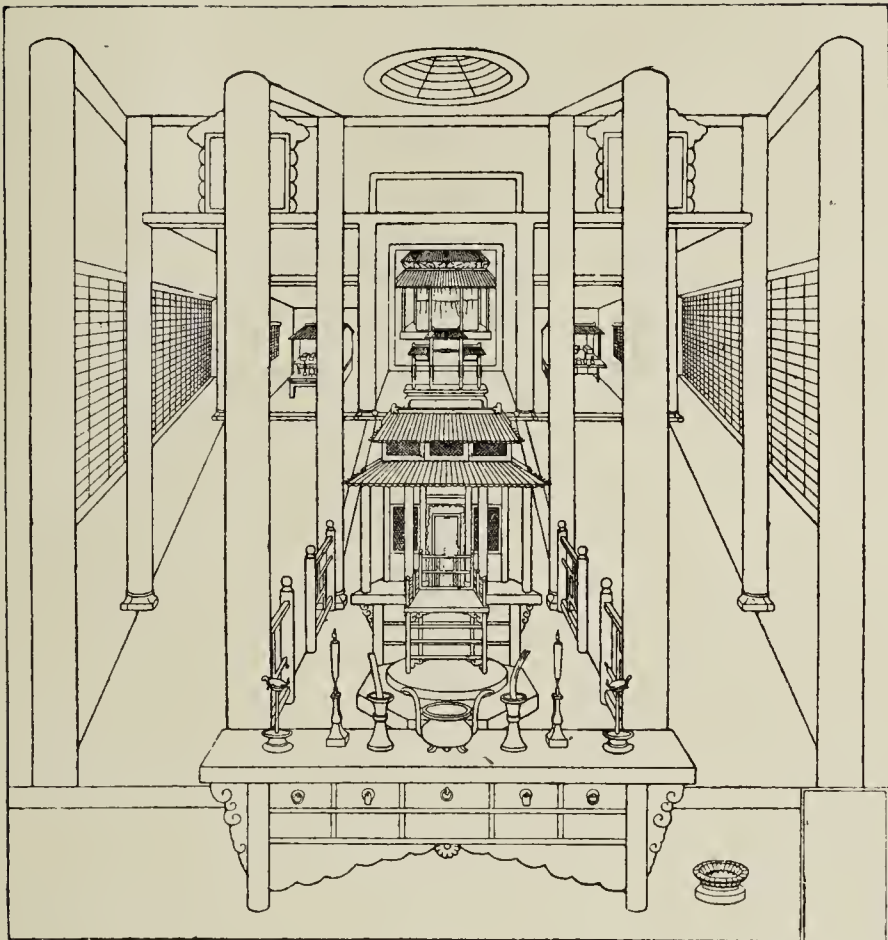
Site for the Extraction of Nerves and Sinews.

Hall of Ancestors.

Tchao's Reception Room.

Another Reception Room.

Dwelling-Houses for Care-takers.



SKETCH OF SYNAGOGUE.

- Large Table for Incense.
- Chair of Moses or Pulpit.
- Balustrade reaching to the Bethel.
- Tablet with Prayer for Emperor.
- Arcade with Inscription.
- Beth 1 surmounted with a Dome.
- Cells for Scrolls.
- Columns.
- Windows.
- Repositories for Prayer Books and Bibles.
- Basin for Washing of Hands.
- Two Tablets on which the Ten Commandments were emblazoned.
- Inscription, "Hear, O Israel."
- Dome surmounting Chair of Moses.

the synagogue being rebuilt 1279, and again in 1489, and of its restoration at the commencement of the seventeenth century, and again in 1653.

Thanks to the explicit accounts of the Jesuits, we are in a position to give a very full description of the communal buildings as they appeared in the early and middle part of the eighteenth century, and these accounts tally with those of the Protestant Mission in 1850, and of recent visitors, who, however, only saw the ruins of what must have been a noble cluster of buildings.

The site covered a space of from three to four hundred feet by 150 feet, and there were four courts proceeding from east to west. The synagogue proper faced west, the direction in which Jerusalem lay. In the centre of the first court there stood a large triumphal arch, called *Pai-leou*, adorned with a Chinese inscription recording its dedication to the Creator and Preserver of all. There were bath-houses and water-chambers in the precincts of this court. The second court was entered by a great gate (only opened on great occasions), and by side doors. The walls were flanked north and south by dwelling-houses for caretakers and keepers. The third court had in its centre a small triumphal arch, flanked on each side by pavilions in which were enshrined two of the engraved stone tablets of which I have already given an account. On the south side of this court was a commemorative chapel in memory of a Jewish mandarin, *Tchao*, a mandarin of the second degree, who rebuilt the synagogue after its destruction by fire. And on the north side there was another chapel in memory of one who erected the edifice then standing. There were also reception-rooms for guests. The fourth court was divided by a long avenue of trees. Halfway stood a great brazen vase of incense, on each side of which there was a brazen vase containing flowers, and a marble lion upon a pedestal. Adjoining the northern wall was a recess in which the nerves and sinews of the animals slain for food were extracted. Some importance seems to have been

attached to this rite, and up to the present time the Jewish community are known under the name of "Teaou-kin-keaou," the sect "that pluck out the sinews." In the second division of the court was the hall of ancestors (Tsoo-tang). Here were venerated—probably at the high festivals in the spring and autumn—the Patriarchs of Old Testament history after the Chinese manner. The name of each was recorded on a tablet; there were no pictures; to each of them was assigned a censer for incense, the largest being for Abraham, others for the other patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Ezra. Then there was an open place where they put up every year, on the Feast of Tabernacles, a booth covered with boughs and ornamented with flowers.

The synagogue proper was a building sixty feet by forty feet, to which access was gained by a portico with a double row of four columns. The handsome roof was supported by columns in the usual style of Chinese domestic architecture.

In the centre of the building was the so-called chair of Moses¹, corresponding, I presume, to our platform, the Almemar; it was a grand seat or pulpit with an embroidered cushion, on which the scrolls of the Law were laid when opened for reading. In front of this pulpit was a tablet on which the name of the emperor was emblazoned in golden letters with a prayer that he might live ten thousand myriads of years. From the dome above were suspended the words in Hebrew—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God! The Lord is one!" and other appropriate quotations in Hebrew. On a large table by the door stood six candelabra, a vase for incense, and a tablet recording the acts of kindness of the emperors of the Ming dynasty, who had directed the burning of the incense.

At the western extremity of the building, on an elevation,

¹ See correspondence in *Revue des Études Juives*, vol. XXXV, p. 110. The Hon. Mayer Sulzberger calls attention to Matt. xxiii. 2.

was the so-called Teën-lang—the House of Heaven—or Bethel, as the Jesuits call it, to which access was gained by steps on both sides. Here the ministering Rabbi and priests only were allowed to enter. In the Teën-lang were placed the thirteen scrolls of the Law, each in a separate case, and enclosed in silk curtains. The scroll in the middle was the one most venerated, and it would appear



CHAIR OF MOSES.

that the other ten or all the twelve were merely copies or transcribed from the venerated one in the middle. At the western end of the building two tablets were conspicuous; they were inscribed with the Ten Commandments in golden letters. The synagogue was known in Chinese as the "Li-pai-se," meaning the weekly meeting-house, because the principal meeting was held on the Sabbath Day.

Father Domingo describes fully the visit he paid to the synagogue on Saturday, October 3, 1722. It happened that this was the eighth day of the festival of Tabernacles, and the visitor comments upon the fact that the portion of the Law that was read upon that day was not the festival portion, but the Song of Moses, Deut. xxxi-xxxii. The following day was the Rejoicing of the Law; which the congregants celebrated, as we do, by making circuits with the scrolls around the synagogue.

As in most Eastern countries, worshippers used to take off their shoes when they entered the house of God, and they put on a blue head-dress in contradistinction to the Mohammedans in China, who used a white head-dress. Whilst reciting the Law the reader covered his face with a transparent veil of gauze, and wore a red silk scarf dependent from the right shoulder and tied under the left arm; by his side stood a monitor to correct him if necessary. The Hebrew books were kept in repositories at the synagogue, and they were rarely allowed to be taken home. This may account for the ignorance of their literature shown by the Chinese Jews. The missionaries give full information as to the mode in which the Jews pronounced the Hebrew. The calendar and the mode in which the festivals were fixed were identical with our own, and resemble in many respects the calendar of the Chinese themselves, who, like the Jews, regulate the year by the moon, the ordinary year consisting of twelve lunar months, every second or third year being a leap year consisting of thirteen months. The Sabbath they observed with great strictness; the food was prepared on the day preceding. Their customs and observances accorded entirely with those of the Rabbinitic Jews of the present day with the one exception that they regarded the New Moon as a festival.

In 1723 the efforts of the missionaries were put a stop to by the Chinese Government.

It was only gradually that the fact of the existence of

a Jewish colony in China came to the knowledge of the Jews in Europe. I found among the MSS. in the British Museum an elaborate letter written in elegant Hebrew by the Haham Isaac, the son of the well-known David Nieto, dated Adar 1, 5520, that is the year 1760¹, in which, in the name of the London Jewish Community, he affectionately addressed his brethren dwelling in the furthestmost East, and implores them to tell him as to their condition and their origin. He subjoins a list of questions which he asks them to answer. Appended to this document is a letter, unsigned, addressed by the writer at the request of his friend, Mr. David Salamons, to a member of the East India Company, asking him for his good offices in getting the letter delivered to the Jewish community in China.

My brother, Elkan Adler, has called my attention to a book written originally in Hebrew by a Morocco Rabbi—Moses Edrehi by name—which was translated into English and published in 1836. Nieto's letter is given in full, and Edrehi states "an answer to the letter was received, and it was couched in the Chinese and Hebrew languages." The original was placed in the museum at the India House. Edrehi says he could not find it. I regret to say I have had no better success.

In the year 1815 some English Jews sent a letter by way of Canton, and a travelling bookseller is reported to have delivered it. But no reply was received.

In 1842 the Treaty of Nankin was concluded, under which five treaty ports were opened to commerce. It was at that time that Mr. James Finn, who subsequently became British Consul at Jerusalem, began to interest himself in the Chinese Jews². In a little book entitled *The Orphan Colony of Jews in China*, published in 1872, he gives the text of a letter composed both in Chinese and Hebrew,

¹ B. M. additional MSS. 29868.

² James Finn, *The Jews in China*. London, 1843. Id., *The Orphan Colony of Jews in China*. London, 1872.

of which the British Consul at Amoy took charge. This reached the hands of the Jews, and the reply, which Mr. Finn did not receive till the year 1870, was very pathetic. The colony seems to have been rapidly declining, their teachers had all died, and there was no one left who could read Hebrew. "Daily with tears in our eyes we call on the Holy Name; if we could but again procure ministers and put our house of prayer in order, our religion would have a firm support."

In the year 1850 a Bishopric was established at Hong-kong, and it was in consequence of a visit which the Rt. Rev. Dr. Smith, Bishop of Victoria, paid to Shanghai, where the London Missionary Society had a branch, that it was decided to send some missionaries to inquire as to the condition of the Jews at Kai-fung-foo. Two Chinese Christians were selected, and, with a view to obtain a ready hearing from the Jews, letters of introduction, drawn up in Hebrew, were obtained from some Jewish Bagdad merchants at Shanghai. The messengers started from Shanghai on November 15, 1850, and travelled by way of the Grand Canal and the Yellow River. I will quote the very words of the Bishop¹. "Here in the midst of the surrounding population, two-thirds of whom were Mohammedans, close to a heathen temple dedicated to the god of fire, were found a few Jewish families, sunk in the lowest poverty and destitution—their religion scarcely more than a name, and yet sufficient to separate them from the multitude around. Exposed to trial, reproach, and the pain of long-deferred hope, they remained the anxious repositories of the Oracle of God, and survived as the solitary witnesses of departed glory. Not one could read Hebrew—their Rabbi had died fifty years ago; the synagogue tottering in ruins, they had petitioned the Chinese Emperor to have pity on their poverty and to rebuild their temple. No reply had been received from Peking, but to this feeble hope

¹ *The Jews at Kae-fung-foo*, London Missionary Society's Press. Shang-hae, 1851. *Jewish Intelligence*. London, 1853, &c.

they still clung. Out of seventy clans only seven remained, numbering about 200 persons. A few were shopkeepers in the city, others were agriculturists on land a little distance from the suburbs, whilst a few lived in the temple precincts almost destitute of raiment and shelter."

The Jews had no hesitation in trusting the messengers, for in comparing the Hebrew writing of the letter of introduction with their own Holy Writings they saw that the style of writing was similar. The men left after a short stay, taking with them eight small books, containing each one of the Sabbath sections of the Law in Hebrew, facsimiles of which have been published.

A few months later the envoys came again, provided this time with some hundreds of pounds, part of the proceeds of a legacy left by Miss Cook to the Missionary Society. This time they secured six copy scrolls, thirty of the weekly portions of the Law, and over thirty quarto books on Chinese paper, containing in more or less complete form the prayers for everyday use, and for Sabbaths and festivals. Dr. Neubauer of Oxford has given a full description of these in the eighth volume of the *JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*¹, an article which Mr. Elkan Adler supplemented in 1898². They are deposited at the museum at Lincoln's Inn of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews.

One point is quite clear, that the ritual used by the Chinese Jews is identical with that laid down by Maimonides in the *Yad-hachazaka*, which is also followed by the Yemen Jews. The Jewish colony may have followed a different ritual in olden times, but the ritual we find established during the last 300 years clearly came by way of Persia; all the rubrics, as Dr. Neubauer has clearly put it, are in the modern Persian language; and the few hymns and poetical additions in the Prayer-book are the same as are found in the old Persian MS. rituals which my brother, Elkan Adler, lately brought

¹ *J. Q. R.*, VIII, 123.

² *J. Q. R.*, X, 584.

over from Persia and Bokhara. The Jesuit Fathers stated that the Chinese Jews had most of the twenty-four books of the Old Testament more or less complete. No part of the Scriptures beyond the Pentateuch has found its way to Europe. It was stated also that the Jews were in possession of some commentaries called by them Kiangtschang, also of the first and second Books of the Maccabees. The Jesuits tried in vain to obtain a sight of these. To many it will be a surprise to hear that a Hebrew-Syriac version of the second Book of Maccabees existed.

I have examined the scrolls of the Law in possession of the Society, also the scroll presented by the Society to the British Museum. I might add that both the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge have been presented with similar copies. One copy was retained at Hongkong. Dr. Martin has supplied Yale College and the Lennox Library at New York each with a scroll. The Hon. Mayer Sulzberger possesses another¹. Dr. Scherzer of the Novara Mission obtained a Roll for the Vienna Library, and we learn that quite recently a Roll has been sent on to Paris. In my opinion they are all executed by ignorant scribes. In fact they are "Chinese" copies of the faulty old copy which was so much venerated by the Jews at Kai-fung-foo, under circumstances referred to in the inscription on Tablet III.

It is strange that most of the scrolls and fragments which have come under my view have the first letter of each column commencing with the letter *vau*. This was a practice of comparatively recent introduction. Not all the instructions of the Sopherim have been complied with, but this seems to arise merely from the ignorance or neglect of the scribes who did the work. There are no

¹ My friend writes to me as follows: "If I should live long enough to see the Chinese troubles settled, and a new Synagogue dedicated at Kai-fung-foo, it would give me great pleasure to contribute the roll for the edification of the descendants and successors of the original owners."

תגין Tagin, no majuscular or minuscular letters. The כתומות and פתוחות are done in haphazard fashion. The four blank lines between each of the books are not attended to. In one instance they are found between ויקרא and צו instead of heading ויקרא¹.

The names of the scribes of the weekly portions of the Law in quarto books on Chinese paper are given in several cases. One of these, at the end of the portion of Genesis, writes as follows:—"In the city originally called Peën-lang, the Holy City by the help of Heaven, the Law with its sections was copied in this year 1935; in the month of Ab, the first day of the week and the third day of the month, the writing of the Law, the entire Law, was finished in the year 1937; in the month of Iyar, the fourth day of the week, the twelfth day of the month, our teacher and master Rabbi Jacob, the son of Rabbi Abishai, grandson of Rabbi Eldad, the Scribe and Teacher, completed it," &c. It should be mentioned that the years here quoted are years of the Seleucid era, and 1935 is equivalent, according to our common reckoning, to 1623.

I have already pronounced my opinion that there is nothing to show that the ancient congregations in China were not descended from the ten lost tribes. But no remains of an archaic literature, such as they should have possessed, have as yet been found.

The reports as to the discovery of the colony at Kai-fung-foo by the Protestant missionaries, and the acquisition by them of a portion of their literature, excited some attention.

When my lamented father, the late Chief Rabbi, became aware of the condition of the colony, he addressed himself to the Board of Deputies with a view to their taking up

¹ As regards the headings of the columns in the six notable instances
:— בי"ה ש'מו

Instead of יורה אהה יורד they have יששכר חמר גרם Gen. xlix. 14.

„ „ שמר לך „ „ שופטים ושוטרים Deut. xvi. 18.

„ „ מה טבו אהלך „ „ מוצא שפחך חשמר Deut. xxiii. 24.

the cause of our forlorn brethren. I imagine that the Taiping rebellion was the cause of the Board not taking any active steps in the matter.

A Jewish association was formed in 1852 in the United States for the encouragement of Jewish missions to distant and neglected settlements. Funds were collected, and it was stated that Judah Touro left a legacy of \$5,000 to the Society. Subsequently the Rev. Dr. Gutheim felt inclined to send out a mission, but the Civil War in the United States stopped the enterprise.

In 1864 the Jewish traveller, Benjamin II, visited England, and he expressed his readiness to visit the settlement¹. I had the honour of being chosen hon. secretary of a Society formed to carry out the scheme. Mr. S. D. Sassoon was appointed the president of this Society, and the late Mr. L. L. Cohen accepted the treasurership. On the committee were Mr. F. D. Mocatta, Dr. Kalisch, Messrs. L. M. Rothschild and Maurice Beddington. The appeal we then issued will be found in the *Jewish Chronicle*, April 29, 1864.

Unfortunately Benjamin caught a chill in London—it was in the month of March, 1864—and died. My father then addressed himself to a branch of the firm of David Sassoon and Co. at Shanghai, and suggested that some youths from the colony might be taken in hand by them and, after preliminary training, be sent to Europe to be educated, and to return to the colony to take up the position of Jewish ministers. But this attempt too proved abortive. Two young men were actually selected and brought to Shanghai, but they soon became homesick and returned to their native place.

The next information about the colony reached us through the medium of the *New York Times*, which published the Journal of Dr. A. P. Martin, in which he gives an account of his journey to the colony. It took him nearly a month to cover the 470 miles, the distance from Pekin to Kai-

¹ J. J. Benjamin II, *Eight Years in Asia and Africa*. Hanover, 1863.

fung-foo. The article has been republished in his book called *A Cycle of Cathay*¹.

His adventures on the way make interesting reading. Arrived at Kai-fung-foo at last, he came to an open square, in the centre of which stood a solitary stone. On one side was an inscription commemorating the erection of the synagogue. On the other, a record of its rebuilding; but the ruins round about told a sad tale of decay and ruin. The representatives of six out of the surviving seven clans came round him, and with shame and grief confessed that their beautiful house had been demolished by their own hands. They had yielded to necessity, and disposed of the timbers and stones to obtain relief for their bodily wants. No doubt the Tai-ping rebellion had told sadly upon the town of Kai-fung-foo, and the Jews, owing to the nature of their occupations, had been the greatest sufferers. Many of them had moved away to other places.

In July, 1867, a Jew named J. L. Liebermann visited the city. He wrote a long Hebrew letter of what he saw to his father in Bielitz. This letter was translated by Dr. Löwy, and appeared in the report of the Anglo-Jewish Association for 1879. It was republished in the *Jewish Chronicle* of July 11, 1879. Another letter appeared in the same journal from a correspondent, dated Kai-fung-foo, May, 1888. It had taken the traveller five weeks on foot to get thither from Peking. In vain he tried to gain admission into the city. He found the inhabitants of the district exceedingly fanatic, and, as now, showed hatred of strangers; his Manchu fellow traveller, however, was able to visit the city. He, as well as Mr. Dennis J. Mills, who visited the spot in 1891, give the same sad tale about the state of the Jews².

More recent information is that derived from an article which appeared on January 12 last in the *American Hebrew*, taken from the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* of December 31.

¹ Edinburgh and London, 1896.

² *China's Millions*, vol. XVI, No. 4. London, 1891.

The article is written by an officer in the German army stationed at Kiatschau, of the name of Herr Lehmann—not Herr J. J. Liebermann, as wrongly given.

On June 10 last my brother, the Chief Rabbi, received two interesting communications with regard to the Chinese Jews, the one from Mr. Lewis Moore and the other from Mr. S. J. Solomon, both merchants at Shanghai. It appears that the Shanghai community had been stirred to action by the fact that the Jesuits in Zikawei had brought a scroll of the Law from the Jews of Kai-fung-foo, which was exhibited at Shanghai, and subsequently sent on to Paris. Soon after a letter reached the community, which I had addressed to Sir Edward Sassoon on February 9 last, invoking his aid and that of his firm towards the rescuing of the Orphan Colony from total extinction. Meetings were held and it was decided to collect reliable information from friends in the interior of China. By this means it was ascertained that a few hundred Jews still exist at Kai-fung-foo and the surrounding districts, but that they are Jews in name alone. They cannot read a word of Hebrew, do not keep the Sabbath, or indeed observe any of our Laws; they have no teacher and no synagogue, and they intermarry with Mohammedans and heathens. A correspondent from Honan wrote:—

I learn that on the Jews coming over here, many hundreds of years ago, there were eight houses or branches bearing the names Li, Chang, Ai, Chao, Tuh, Shih, Kao.

Two of the families bore the name of Li.

These clans still exist, numbering about forty houses and about 140 persons. These are all in Kai-fung-foo. There are also scattered about in some parts a few, but not very many; their condition, socially, is not very high. Once they were the richest and most influential people in the place, but through internal dissension they have dwindled down until now they are very poor, and, I am sorry to add, have not a very good reputation. One of them is a Buddhist priest, and is in the position of a small mandarin—that is, he manages the affairs of all the other priests; it was his brother who came to see me.

Of the knowledge of their religion, I think they have not very

much ; I do not think the majority of them know the origin of their name.

The people belong to the "Teaou-kin-keaou," i. e. the "Pick-out-sinew" religion, after the incident mentioned in Genesis, chap. xxxii, verses 24 to 32. When I turned up the Bible and showed him the account, and explained the origin of their name, he was much interested.

I went and saw the place where once a beautiful synagogue stood, but now it is a water-hole with a stone standing alongside, a solitary witness to the one true God ; on this stone the names of Abraham, Moses, Adam, &c., are mentioned, with an account of their religion. This man who came to see me promised to get me an impression of it, and if I do get it I could send you a copy. This, it is believed, is not the original stone, but one which has been put up some 200 years ago ; the other one is built into the wall of some house—this man knows where it is.

They do not observe any of the ordinances of their religion, neither do they, with the exception of the Buddhist priest, observe the idolatrous practice of the heathen ; they do, however, intermarry with them.

As to whether any of them could be induced to go down to Shanghai, I am unable to form an opinion, but one could find out by inquiries. With regard to your going out to Kai-fung-foo on a mission of investigation, I think it could be managed, provided you did so under "native conditions"!

Mr. S. J. Solomon further states that he had been informed that a certain Colonel Lehmann who is in the German army, and who was in Kiatschau, had been a few months ago in a place about 100 miles south-west of Kai-fung-foo, where there were about 500 native Jews, most of whom were engaged in the silk piece goods trade.

This information is confirmed by a letter received from the secretary of the Shanghai branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Under date November 18, 1899, he writes:—

The Jewish colony has spread to other towns. Their occupation as silk weavers took some of them to a distance. Some families were well-to-do through connexion with this trade. One of the moderately large towns near Kai-fung-foo, where there is a colony of Jews, is called Tang-chwang. It is a mile and a half long, and is about 100 miles south-west of Kai-fung-foo. The Jews are all people well to-do.

They weave the silk fabric called ling, and take it or send it to Pekin.

On March 13 this year the following letter was written in Hebrew and dispatched, together with a Chinese translation (made by Dr. Jedkins of the I. M. Customs), through the channel of certain trustworthy agents residing in the interior of China:—

To the remnant of the Jewish community of Kai-fung-foo by the members of the Jewish congregation in Shanghai.

We address you, brethren in faith, having heard that in days gone by you had a synagogue at Kai-fung-foo, and ministers who taught you the ordinances and laws, how to worship the Lord God of Israel. We now learn that your House of Worship is destroyed, and that you have no Rabbi or teacher to instruct you, and to show you the way wherein you should walk as prescribed by the law of Moses, and as we are exhorted by the prophets and Ezra the scribe.

We are told that you have forgotten everything, and have gone so far as, three or four months ago, to have sold a scroll of the Law, which our own eyes have seen in the hands of those that are not of the seed of Israel. And we are further told that you are about to dispose of three or four more scrolls because you are in dire distress, and urge as your excuse that you and your children cannot read.

Now, verily, sorrow and anxiety filled our hearts when we heard these evil tidings, that affliction and want have brought you to this pass, so that Sabbath and festivals are forgotten, and that you are becoming mixed up with the heathen around you, and that you forsake the covenant, and the way your forefathers have walked for 2000 years in this land of your settlement. Tidings such as these caused the ears of every one of us that heard to tingle, and we have roused ourselves to come to your help.

Some of us were willing to come to you to find out wherefore all this evil has befallen you, and to see what we could do to heal the breach. But we are told that there would be danger to us on the way, and that if we did come in your midst, our presence would rouse anger and excite the Gentiles among whom you dwell, therefore we decided to write to you this epistle, and to ask you to send us an answer, either by letter or by word of mouth, through a member of your community.

Now, we assure you that we are eager to help you according to our ability, so that you may walk again in the footsteps of your forefathers. If you desire to rebuild the House of God, which is now

become a waste place, we will collect money and send it to you ; if you want a teacher to instruct you, we will send you one ; if it should please you to come hither and settle here in the city of Shanghai, we will help you to do so, and put you in the way to earn a livelihood by starting you in trade, and all that you may require we will endeavour to supply you with, for there are in this city men of our faith—great and wealthy, men of affairs and business, who can help you to maintain yourselves and your sons and daughters.

Therefore we beg you not to part with the scrolls still left to you. On this letter reaching you, send two or three men to us whom we may question, and from whom we can find out what we can do for you. We will pay all the expenses of the messengers ; we will give them their sustenance, and pay them their expenses until they reach again your city.

Signed in the city of Shanghai this 3rd day of the week, the 12th day of Adar 11, 5660 A. M.

Signed by S. J. SOLOMON,

DAVID EZEKIEL ABRAHAM,

And forty-four other members of the Jewish community in
Shanghai.

I have now brought the matter up to the position in which it stands to-day. We can but hope that this letter, with its generous offer, will reach its destination, and that, despite the present gloomy outlook of Chinese affairs, the Orphan Colony may yet at the eleventh hour be saved from assimilation or extinction.

MARCUS N. ADLER.

22 CRAVEN HILL, LONDON.

DATE DUE

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